

DRAFT PROPOSED LETTER FOR  
DRAINAGE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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ADDRESS

Dear Mr. McDonald:

The Drainage Oversight Committee, consisting of the fourteen persons listed below, who previously also served together as members of the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program Citizens Advisory Committee, have the following joint comments on the Bureau of Reclamation's "Discussion Paper on Repayment of Kesterson Reservoir Cleanup Program and San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program Costs". These comments are, of course, separate from or in addition to comments which individuals or organizations represented on the committee may submit on the Discussion Paper as well.

The Committee has been working together for several years in an attempt to build a set of relationships among constituencies interested in San Joaquin Valley drainage problems, and to contribute to a common basis of information and knowledge among those participants, such that broadly supported solutions to those problems may be fashioned by the appropriate levels of government and the private sector. In the course of the Committee's deliberations, it developed a set of positions on questions of drainage problem financing and repayment, a copy of which is attached to this letter.

As the Committee now turns its attention to the Bureau's Discussion Paper, it finds that the development of a consensus position on specific

recommendations set forth in that Discussion Paper is difficult, if not impossible, because of the context in which the Paper was released. In the Paper, the Bureau seeks to develop definitive positions on Kesterson Reservoir clean-up and repayment of Drainage Program costs, without having made a determination as to what future drainage management program it proposes to pursue, if any, and how it proposes that program's costs be financed and/or repaid. Some members of the Committee are affected financially on a more or less immediate basis by the Paper's proposed cost allocation; other members are concerned that too many of the sunk costs of federal drainage programs are deferred to a far-off future or are laid off entirely on taxpayers or supposed beneficiaries against whom the apparent capacity of the Bureau to recover costs is limited or non-existent. Bridging the gap between these concerns might be worth further effort by the Committee if a part of its consideration were the rendering of advice on financing and repayment of a designated set of proposed future drainage management policies. In the absence of such policies, however, developing a more detailed position on the remaining issues is beyond the Committee's capacity.

Thank you again for offering us the opportunity to comment. The Committee as a whole continues to believe that progress on resolving the Valley's drainage problems is most likely if those involved work to develop programs that are based on a consensus approach. That is certainly the approach the Committee itself will strive to maintain as it looks to see what actions are proposed in the aftermath of the publication of the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program Management Plan.

Sincerely yours,

Committee Members